

THE PAṬṬHĀNA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THERAVĀDIN ABHIDHAMMA

Vijñānavādin antecedents

Vasubandhu and a number of other Vijñānavādin writers defend the key idealist doctrine of the *ālaya-vijñāna* or store-consciousness from the charge of innovation by appealing to pre-existent notions among the Mahāsāṅghikas and Mahīśāsakas and also to the idea of the *bhavāṅga-vijñāna*.¹ The first two of these are mentioned already by Asaṅga.

One of the principal functions of the concept of *ālaya-vijñāna* is to solve the two closely related problems of the continuity of personality and the mechanism of karma without postulating an unchanging soul or substratum of existence. It is not then surprising to find the *pudgala* doctrine of the powerful Sāṃmitīya school omitted from the list of predecessors. The equally numerous but historically more influential sect of the Sarvāstivāda had no need for a storehouse-consciousness; for it held that past and future dharmas exist and accepted a physical manifestation of karma. Not surprisingly Asaṅga and his successors looked especially for support to ideas derived from the traditions of that considerable body of schools which had not accepted either the *pudgala* or the so-called realist doctrine of *sarvam asti*.

Unfortunately the two sources cited by Asaṅga are among the early Buddhist sects whose particular doctrines are less well-known to us. It is therefore impossible to judge how far Asaṅga's claims for the antiquity of the idea of the *ālaya-vijñāna* are really justified. Vasubandhu's reference to the *bhavāṅga-vijñāna* is therefore of particular importance. He himself attributes it to the Sinhalese sect (Tāmrapaṇḍīya-nikāya), but later Vijñānavādin writers refer to this as a doctrine of the Sthaviras or Vibhajyavādins. At least two of these names must in this context refer to the school known today as the Theravāda.

North Indian Buddhist sources do not often mention the Theravāda before the Pāla period. There are, it is true, a few indications of a measure of interaction. Chinese sources inform

us that the Sinhalese monastery at Bodhgayā which was visited by Hsüan-tsang was founded during the reign of Samudragupta (latter half of the fourth century). Sinhalese monks are mentioned in an inscription at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa dated to the third quarter of the third century A.D. Further south the situation was perhaps rather different. The Ceylon commentaries give the impression that the Theravāda was well established in the Coḷa country in the time of Buddhaddatta and Buddhaghosa (fl. c.430 A.D.). Indeed these works show that the Buddhists of the Theravāda school were reasonably aware of their mainly Mahāsāṅghika co-religionists in South India, but knew little of the North Indian systems.

We need not suppose that there was no connection at all between North and South India. This is quite obviously not the case with Buddhist art. More probably ideas and practices percolated slowly in both directions by means of intermediaries. In the present connection, however, it is possible that we should look more specifically to the Mahīśāsaka school for a means of transmission. Asaṅga in fact mentions their doctrine of the *āśamsārika-skandha* as a precursor of *ālaya-vijñāna*. Hsüan-tsang informs us that Asaṅga was originally a member of this school himself. Its geographical spread appears to have been particularly wide. Fa-hsien obtained a copy of their Vinaya in Ceylon, while the author of the Jātaka Commentary states that he was invited to compose the work by a monk of the Mahīśāsaka-vaṃsa. If we are to believe the *Visuddhimaggagaṇṭhipada*,² Buddhaghosa cites a work of theirs entitled *Peṭaka*; this may or may not be the work known to us as *Peṭakopadesa*. If the two can be identified, this would tend to confirm Bareau's suggestion that the Mahīśāsaka were originally the mainland counterpart of the Theravāda.³

Origins of the term bhavāṅga

Whether there is any direct influence or not, only from Theravādin sources can we at present hope to investigate Asaṅga's claim. The Pali term *bhavaṅga* first appears in this sense in the *Paṭṭhāna* and then in the *Milinda-pañha*.⁴ Keith comments:

The *bhavaṅga*, or stream of being, is a conception barely known in the Abhidhamma, and there not explained, but it evidently has already here⁵ the sense of a continuum which is not conscious, but from which consciousness emerges, and which may therefore be reckoned as subconscious.⁶

With some qualification this is the position of the commentaries. It cannot, however, be taken as evidence for an earlier period. The relevant section of the *Milinda-pañha* cannot be dated with certainty much prior to the fifth century.

A rather different approach is taken by Sarathchandra in his study of the theory of the *citta-vīthi*. He writes: 'The word *bhavaṅga*, borrowed from the Sarvastivāda Abhidharma, meant originally a link in the Causal Chain or *pratītyasamutpāda*'.⁷ This usage of the term is in fact not unknown to Pali literature. The formula of dependent origination is quite widely known as the wheel of existence (*bhava*). So it is quite natural for its parts to be referred to as factors of existence. Such a usage is explicit in the *Netti-pakarāṇa*, which lists the various terms which make up dependent origination and concludes:

*Imāni bhavaṅgāni yadā samaggāni nibbattāni bhavanti, so bhavo. Taṃ saṃsāraṇaṃ padaṭṭhānaṃ.*⁸

When these factors of existence are conjointly produced, this is existence. Existence is the proximate cause of saṃsāra.

Later in the same work it becomes clear that the term *bhavaṅga* is used in the sense of a factor which tends to produce existence. The term also occurs once in the *Peṭakopadesa*, apparently in the same sense.⁹

The dating of the *Netti-pakarāṇa* and *Peṭakopadesa* is uncertain. Both were known to Buddhaghosa. The *Peṭakopadesa* seems to have influenced the *Vimuttimaggā*, a pre-Buddhaghosa work, which only survives in Chinese translation. Nāṇamoli has, however, shown that the *Netti-pakarāṇa* is in part based upon the *Peṭakopadesa*. He has also argued that the latter shows signs of being in origin an oral work.¹⁰ My own reading of it has left me with the same impression. Since it shows traces of influence from some of the earlier works of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*, it may be appropriate to think of the second century B.C. for the

work in its present form. Of course it is quite likely that it incorporates earlier traditions. The *Netti-pakarāṇa* was dated by Hardy to 'about the beginning of our era or shortly later.'¹¹ An earlier date is not impossible.

On this basis it would seem that the use in these two works of the term *bhavaṅga* to designate the links of dependent origination is as old as its use in Sarvastivādin and Mahāyānist literature. No doubt it is best looked upon as part of the common stock of Buddhist technical terminology of the period. In fact it seems quite plain that this is the original meaning of the term, from which the use to designate a type of consciousness is derived.

In the commentarial literature *bhavaṅga* is explained as meaning cause (*hetu*) of existence. This is perhaps simply to say that the twelve *aṅgas* of dependent origination are identical to the twelve *paccayas* (conditions) or twelve *nidānas* (origins) and are hence in fact causes. This would be reinforced by the widespread use of expressions such as *ten' aṅgena* effectively in the sense of 'for this reason'.

The source of the term *bhavaṅga* used to designate or qualify a particular type of consciousness is then apparent. In the formula of dependent origination the third *aṅga* is consciousness, but in this context it is often used specifically to refer to consciousness at the moment of conception. This would be a less active type of consciousness resulting from past actions. Just such is the *bhavaṅga-citta* of the commentaries. In fact the connection is not entirely forgotten. The later tradition relates the consciousness at conception (*paṭisandhi*) and at death (*cuti*) to the *bhavaṅga* mind. To a large extent these are treated as special terms for the first and last in the series of moments of *bhavaṅga* consciousness.¹²

The theory of the citta-vīthi in the commentaries

Perhaps at this point it would be useful to turn to the description of the process of consciousness given in the commentarial tradition. From here it may be easier to approach the origin and development of the system at an earlier period in the development of the abhidhamma. The system is set out in the works of Buddhaghosa, in detail in the *Visuddhimaggā* and *Aṭṭhasālinī*,

more briefly in his Sutta commentaries; in the writings of Buddhaddatta and in the Chinese translation of the *Vimuttimaggā*. Pali commentators and subcommentators after the fifth century A.D. add only a very little. The present account will be largely based upon the account of Buddhaghosa.¹³

The commentarial description of the consciousness process is highly complex. This is partly due to the abhidhamma attempt to cover all possible cases. So it can be made much simpler by excluding matters which apply only to non-human beings, to defective human beings or to normal human beings who are either experiencing some kind of higher consciousness or have attained some degree of sanctity. In this way a restricted account of the process as it applies to the ordinary person can be given.

Only forty five types of consciousness are then relevant. They fall into two groups:

a) *caused* — the cause will either be delusion or one of the possible combinations among delusion, greed, hate, non-greed, non-hate or non-delusion. Twenty eight types of caused consciousness are listed, divided into eight skilful, eight resultant and twelve unskilful.

b) *causeless* — i.e. not caused by any of the above. These number seventeen. This is made up of five sense consciousnesses which result from skilful action, five which result from unskilful action, the two mind elements (*mano-dhātu*) resulting from skilful and unskilful action respectively, mind consciousness element (*manovīññāṇa-dhātu*) resulting from unskilful action, two mind consciousness elements resulting from skilful action but differentiated by the accompanying feeling, the mind element which is purely activity (*kiriya*) and the mind consciousness element (accompanied by neutral feeling) which is purely activity.

The term *kiriya* designates a type of mentality which does not take part in the kammic process—it is neither the result of some previous action nor does it itself give rise to any result in the future. As the term applies most frequently to the state of mind of the arahat, it should not be translated by words such as 'functional' or 'inoperative', which have inappropriate connotations. The *kiriya* mind is not mechanical, effete or unfeelingly robotic. Rather it is intended to designate the spiritual sensitivity of a man of developed wisdom, who responds to every situation with

appropriate activity without partiality of any kind. Here of course it is occurring in a weak form accessible to all.

Each of the above types of consciousness represents an interlocking complex of phenomena, made up of the appropriate type of mind, a number of appropriate mentals (*cetasika*) and groups of material phenomena of various kinds. The number of mentals will vary from a minimum of seven in the simplest form of sense consciousness up to a maximum of thirty five in a developed skilful consciousness. They will also vary *qualitatively* according to the type of consciousness. So for example the feeling which accompanies a skilful mind is itself skilful and qualitatively different to the feeling accompanying an unskilful mind. The precise details of all this do not concern us here. It suffices perhaps to point out that the commentarial account of all this is firmly based upon the description given in the *Dhammasaṅgani*. A few additional details have been added, but there are no changes of substance.

Mind door process

In fact this work gives a fairly static account of mentality and matter as they occur in particular moments—analogue let us say to a single frame in a motion picture. The theory of the *citta-vīthi* attempts to show their occurrence over a series of such moments—more analogous to a particular event in the film. Two types of process are described: five door process and mind door process. These may occur in succession to one another or the mind door process may occur independently. We will take the latter simpler case first. This describes the situation of the individual who is absorbed in thought or memory without any direct perception of his sensory environment.

In this mind door process we need only take account of four of the functions (*kiecca*) of consciousness:

1. *Bhavaṅga* — this is always one of the eight kinds of consciousness which are resultant and caused. The same type of mentality will normally perform this function throughout the life of a given individual. Its precise nature will be determined either by previous actions recalled to mind at the end of the

previous life or by the manner in which death was met. Nevertheless it must be one of the above eight which result from some kind of skilful action or normal human birth could not have occurred. We may interpret its continuance throughout life as the natural mode to which the mind continually reverts as indicating its role of 'carrying' the essential features of the individual—those tendencies which remain apparently unchanged in a particular individual throughout a given life.

2. *Adverting* — this will always be a single occurrence of the *kiriya* mind consciousness element (uncaused and accompanied by neutral feeling).

3. *Javana* — this will either be one of the eight skilful or one of the twelve unskilful consciousnesses. The term *javana* 'running' appears to be used to indicate the active nature of the mentality which performs this function. We may compare the simile given to differentiate skilful from resultant consciousness:

... the resultant is free from striving and like such things as the reflection (*nimitta*) of the face on the surface of a mirror; the skilful does involve striving and is like the face itself.¹⁴

Javana mind then makes up all the more active components of the individual. We may interpret its continual recurrence in different forms as indicating the everchanging manifestations of human personality—all those behaviour patterns formed by experience and habit in the course of life.

4. *Tadārammaṇa* — this is also called *piṭṭhi-bhavaṅga* 'after-bhavaṅga' to indicate that a special kind of *bhavaṅga* mind can occur immediately after a series of *javana* moments.¹⁵ The term *tadārammaṇa* 'having the same object' is used to indicate that this kind of *bhavaṅga* retains the object of the *javana* mind. It may perhaps be seen as fixing the conscious experience of the *javana* stage in the unconscious mind. *Bhavaṅga* however is only unconscious in the sense that the subsequent memory of it is unclear. We may perhaps rather see the *tadārammaṇa* as providing a substitute which can partially displace the original *bhavaṅga*—not of course completely. This would be especially appropriate in the case of persistent unskilful activity. The function of *tadārammaṇa* is performed by eleven types of resultant consciousness

—eight caused and three causeless mind consciousness elements. It will only occur if the mental object is clear. Otherwise as soon as the *javana* mind ceases the mind enters *bhavaṅga*.

TABLE ONE : MIND DOOR PROCESS

function	<i>bhavaṅga</i>	<i>adverting</i>	<i>javana</i>	<i>tadārammaṇa</i>
<i>citta</i>	caused	causeless mind consciousness element	skilful or unskilful	mind consciousness element
<i>associated cetasikas</i>	up to 33	11	up to 34 or up to 21	up to 33 (caused) up to 11 (causeless)
<i>kammic status</i>	result of action	neither action nor result of action	action	result of action
<i>duration</i>	no definite limit	one moment	up to seven moments	one or two moments

This then is the normal flow of the mind when attention is not paid to the senses. If there is no particular activity, it remains in a state of rest: *bhavaṅga*. This continues without interruption in deep dreamless sleep. If thought or memory occur, then the active *javana* stage has arisen. In vague musing or unclear remembering there may be continual alternation between these two modes; for the active mode has only a limited duration before the mind must lapse into its normal passive mode. Of course to refer to these as modes is not strictly accurate. Abhidhamma envisages a continual flow of consciousness arising and ceasing in every moment 'as if it were the stream of a river'.¹⁶ We may note however that direct transition is envisaged from active mode to passive, but not from passive to active. In the latter case *kiriya* mind must occur for one moment in order to turn *bhavaṅga* towards the object.

But what is the object at the mind door? Traditionally it may be any kind of object—past, present or future, purely conceptual or even transcendent. In the normal case, however, it will be either a memory of the past or some kind of concept. The door of its arising will be 'one part of the organ of mind reckoned as

bhavaṅga mind'.¹⁷ To be more exact it is disturbed *bhavaṅga* (*bhavaṅga-calana*) in conjunction with adverting which constitutes the door of mind, often treated in Buddhist thought as a sixth sense. Of course abhidhamma avoids describing consciousness as divided into parts; it always prefers a description in terms of successive moments.

Undisturbed *bhavaṅga* is described as clear or translucent.¹⁸ Evidently it is seen either as storing past experience or as having direct access to the past (or future). In the first case we might understand it as an unconscious storehouse. The mind as a whole is certainly envisaged as accumulating tendencies, but it is not clear how far this would include experiences. What is probably intended is a water metaphor. Just as an undisturbed pool or stream is clear and offers no obstruction to vision, so *bhavaṅga* mind is intrinsically clear and featureless. When the pool is disturbed it is no longer possible to see through it—the water which it contains is now visible. Similarly when *bhavaṅga* mind is disturbed, it is no longer translucent; some part of its content becomes visible. Possibly this would not be so much the mind's content as part of its potential capacity to know becoming realized.

Sense door process

It is more normal to explain the process involving sense perception first. The reason, no doubt, is the predominant part played by the senses in our ordinary life. Abhidhamma evidently conceives of them as conditioning a great part of our experience in a largely mechanical fashion. Technically this would be expressed by saying that five door *javana* is the foundation of mind door *javana*.¹⁹ However sense door process involves a greater number of functions than mind door process and at first appears more complex in its operation. So it is appropriate to list these:

1. *Bhavaṅga* — this was described above, but without distinguishing disturbed *bhavaṅga* as a separate stage.

2. *Disturbed bhavaṅga* — this occurs for two moments only, due to the stimulus of a sense object. Strictly speaking the object enters the field of the mind sense. At exactly the same

moment sensory contact takes place with a physical impact (*ghaṭṭana*) upon the subtle matter which is the physical basis for the operation of sense consciousness.²⁰

3. *Adverting* — the function of adverting to one of the sense doors is always undertaken by the *kiriya* mind element, which has in fact no other function apart from turning the mind towards a sense. As was the case for mind door adverting, its duration is for one moment only.

4. *Seeing* — we will take this as our example for the senses. At this stage we are concerned with 'seeing only' with a minimal interpretative element. So this function is performed either by a visual consciousness which is the result of skilful action or by one which is the result of unskilful action. Which of the two it will be is determined by the nature of the object.²¹ If it is the result of skilful action the neutral feeling which accompanies it will be subtle and will shade towards pleasant feeling. If it is the result of unskilful action that feeling will be inferior and will shade towards unpleasant feeling.²² The same will be the case for hearing, tasting or smelling, but not for touching. Tactile sensation is conceived of as stronger. So body consciousness which is the result of skilful action is accompanied by a distinctive form of pleasant feeling, while unpleasant feeling invariably accompanies unskilful resultant body consciousness.

5. *Receiving (sampaṭicchana)* — this function is always performed by one of the two resultant mind elements. In fact mind element has only the role of enabling transit to and from a sense consciousness; the 'twice five' sense consciousnesses are invariably preceded by one moment of *kiriya* mind element and invariably followed by one moment of resultant mind element. The point seems to be that the normal state of the mind is the flow of resultant consciousness. Sense consciousness is quite different to this. So an intermediary is required for the passage between the two. This is rendered very neatly by the simile of the thread. A ground spider extends thread in five directions making a web and settles down in the middle. When one of the threads is struck by an insect, it is disturbed and comes out from its resting place. It follows along the thread, drinks the juice of its prey, comes back and settles down in the very same place.²³

6. *Examining (santīraṇa)* — this function is always carried out

TABLE TWO : EYE DOOR PROCESS

function	bhavaṅga	disturbed bhavaṅga	adverting	seeing	receiving	investigating	determining	javana	tad-ārammaṇa
<i>citta</i>	caused	caused	mind element	eye consciousness	mind element	causeless mind consciousness element	causeless mind consciousness element	skilful or unskilful	mind consciousness element
<i>associated cetasikas</i>	up to 33	up to 33	10	7	10	up to 11	11	up to 34 or up to 21	up to 33 (caused) up to 11 (causeless)
<i>kammic status</i>	result of action	result of action	neither act nor result of action	result of action	result of action	result of action	neither act nor result of action	action	result of action
<i>duration</i>	no definite limit	two moments	one moment	one moment	one moment	one moment	one moment	up to seven moments	one or two moments
<i>feeling</i>	pleasant or neutral	pleasant or neutral	neutral	neutral	neutral	pleasant or neutral	neutral	pleasant unpleasant or neutral	pleasant or neutral

by one of the three resultant mind consciousness elements. In effect the mind has returned to a weak form of resultant consciousness which is able to examine the object. This can also be expressed by saying that the mental of recognition (*saññā*) is prominent at this stage of the process.

7. *Establishing (votthapana)* — is carried out by the *kiriya* mind consciousness element. We may see it as enabling the arising of the active *javana* stage. The mind is now able to establish the nature of the object. It is often compared to smelling food prior to eating it. Establishing determines the nature of the mind's response to the object which has been identified.

8. *Javana* — was discussed above. It is compared to the act of actually eating the food.

9. *Tad-ārammaṇa* — was also discussed earlier. It resembles the act of savouring the taste of food after it has been eaten.

The most difficult part of the sense door process is probably to be found in stages four to seven, but it can perhaps be clarified by another of the traditional similes. Some village boys were sitting playing a game on the road with mud.²⁴ A square coin made contact with the hand of one of the boys. The boy asked what it was that had touched his hand. Another boy said that it was pale (*paṇḍara*). One boy took firm hold of it together with the mud. Another said that it was square and flat. Yet another declared that it was a silver crown (*kahāpaṇa*). They took it and gave it to their mother, who used it for some task (*kamma*). Taking hold of the coin is compared to the mind receiving an object. Identifying it as square and flat is like the stage of examining, while the stage of establishing resembles the decision that it is worth one crown. The actual utilization of the coin (by the mother) is similar to the mind performing the function of *javana*.

What are we to make of this? The implication is clear. Visual perception involves not only seeing itself, but also fixing of the object in the mind, recognition of its general features and identification of its nature. These things are obviously very closely linked. In abhidhamma such a close relationship tends to be expressed in process terms as a succession of moments. A very close connection will be a rapid and constant succession. This is exactly what we have here. [Each single distinct visual perception involves a separate adverting, a separate seeing, a separate receiving, a

separate examining and a separate establishing. Each of these occurs for one moment only. The five always occur together and always in the same logically required order of succession.]

Some variations in the process

The same is not true for the five door process as a whole. Only for very great objects i.e. distinct percepts does the process complete all nine stages before lapsing back into *bhavaṅga*. If the sensory stimulus is weaker, then an incomplete process may occur. This is called a fruitless case (*mogha-vāra*). Three possibilities are allowed:

a) Innumerable objects occur at the sense doors without being strong enough to bring about adverting to one of the five doors. In this case only disturbed *bhavaṅga* will occur. Presumably the intention is to indicate that many of our sensory stimuli are not consciously registered.

b) The stimulus may be adequate to bring about adverting and the succeeding stages down to establishing. We are told that this is the kind of case in which one says: 'it is as if seen by me'.²⁵ What is meant here is probably the type of occasion in which one might say: 'I thought I saw someone among the trees.' Something has been identified but is not yet clearly seen.

c) A stronger stimulus may be sufficient to bring about all the stages down to *javana*, but not enough to produce the last stage. This is illustrated by a simile. The damming of a river is compared to adverting which diverts the mind from the flow of *bhavaṅga*. The series of process consciousnesses is compared to the diverted water running in a great irrigation channel. *Javana* is like the water flooding the fields on both sides of the channel. Lapsing back into *bhavaṅga* without the occurrence of *tad-ārammaṇa* resembles water running away through fissures back down to the river. We are told that there is no way to count the number of consciousnesses which do this.

Only one variation is permitted for the mind door process. If the object is clear the *tad-ārammaṇa* stage will arise. If it is not clear the mind will go back down to *bhavaṅga* immediately after the *javana* stage. The reason for this difference between

sense door and mind door process is apparent. [Sense door process is aroused by the stimulus of a sense object and exists only in dependence upon such an object. It must then lapse if the object ceases to exist. The same is not the case for mind door process, whose object need not be of the present. The different forms of sense door process are due to variation in the *duration* of particular stimuli even if we experience this as varying vividness of perception. The two kinds of mind door process differ because of variation in the *clarity* of the object, the impulse as it were coming from within.] In practice however the process which terminates with the *javana* stage must be experienced as a lack of perceptual clarity in either case.

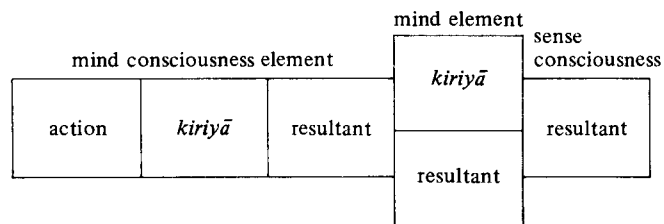
Obviously this is a rather simplified account of the abhidhamma theory of mental process. By excluding higher states of being from consideration much of the intended significance is lost. In fact a hierarchy of different states is involved. This is partly described in numerical terms—weaker states have fewer accompanying mentals than stronger states; skilful states tend to involve more mentals than unskilful ones. Still more important are qualitative differences, often only indicated by a single terminological change. For example supramundane consciousness may not necessarily have more accompanying mentals than a given *lokiya* skilful consciousness. Nevertheless it is qualitatively superior. Moreover each of its accompanying mentals is qualitatively superior to the same mental associated with the corresponding *lokiya* consciousness.

Sequential structure of the process

The simplified account does however have the advantage that it makes much clearer some significant features of the process. This is best shown by setting out the distribution of the forty five consciousnesses in grid form. In each section is given the number of possible types of consciousness together with the maximum number of accompanying mentals (in brackets).

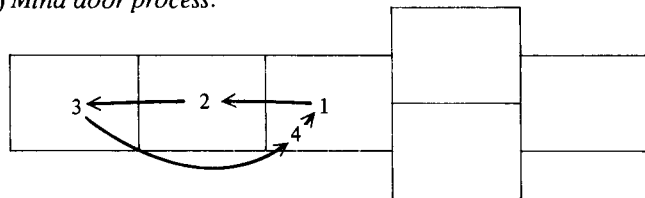
	Mind consciousness element	Mind element	Eye consciousness element
Skilful or Unskilful	twenty (34)	none	none
Kiriya	one (11)	one (10)	none
Resultant	eleven (33)	two (10)	ten (7)

If we now rearrange this material slightly we can use it to form a picture of the way in which the process of mind works:

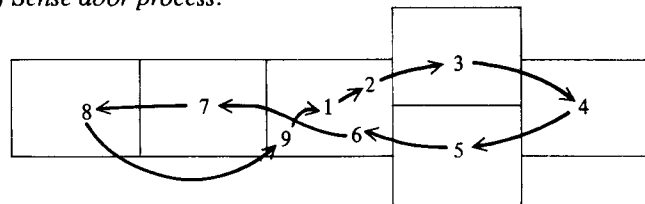


If we now set out the different possible sequences using the same numeration as before, we get:

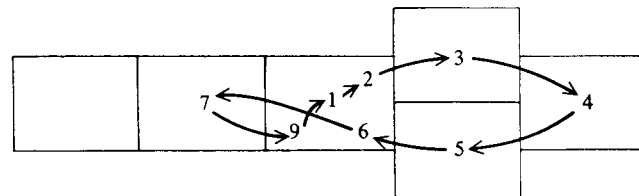
A) Mind door process:



B) Sense door process:



C) Incomplete sense door process:



Two points of particular importance emerge. Firstly any change from the normal passive state of mind (i.e. resultant mind consciousness element) is brought about by *kiriya* mind. This alone can bring about the arising of skilful or unskilful *javana* mind and only this can turn the mind to a sensory mode. Secondly mind element always intervenes before and after a sense consciousness. The consequence of these and some other restrictions is to sharply limit the number of permissible successions between moments. This can be set out in tabular form:

permissible succession

from	unskilful	to	unskilful
"	unskilful	"	resultant
"	skilful	"	skilful
"	skilful	"	resultant
"	resultant	"	resultant
"	resultant	"	<i>kiriya</i>
"	<i>kiriya</i>	"	any
from	mind consciousness element	"	mind consciousness element
"	mind consciousness element	"	mind element
"	mind element	"	eye consciousness element
"	mind element	"	mind consciousness element
"	eye consciousness element	"	mind element

impermissible succession

from	unskilful	to	skilful
"	unskilful	"	<i>kiriya</i>
"	skilful	"	unskilful
"	skilful	"	<i>kiriya</i>
"	resultant	"	skilful
"	resultant	"	unskilful
from	mind consciousness element	"	eye consciousness element
"	mind element	"	mind element
"	eye consciousness element	"	eye consciousness element
"	eye consciousness element	"	mind consciousness element

The consciousness process before Buddhaghosa

All of this amounts to a fairly complex and sophisticated theory of mental processes. Naturally the question arises as to its origin. Sarathchandra writes:—

The theory is quite unique in the history of Indian thought, and it was probably the work of Buddhaghosa who came to Ceylon after having immersed himself in Sanskrit philosophy.²⁶

This seems a very unsatisfactory statement of the position. The clearest evidence that the theory was well-established in the older Sinhalese commentaries prior to Buddhaghosa and Buddhaddatta is perhaps to be found in the *Aṭṭhasālinī*, the commentary to the first book of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*. Here we find a long passage reproduced under the title of *Vipākuddhāra-kathā*.²⁷

Careful reading of this piece, which takes up just over twenty pages in the PTS edition, shows that it is reproduced directly from an old source, almost certainly a Sinhalese *aṭṭhakathā*. It commences with what it calls a *mātikā*, which in this kind of context is in effect a table of contents. This gives three different enumerations of the various types of resultant mentality. These are attributed to three named Elders. It then immediately states: 'In this place they took what is called the *Sāketā Question*'. This records the traditional response to the question as to whether one *kamma* could have more than one resultant *citta* or vice versa.

Immediately after this we read: 'Again in this place what is called the *Explanation of Prominence* was taken. 'This is referred to by name in the *Visuddhi-magga*, where it is regarded as the authoritative decision following the thought of the Commentarial teachers (. . . *Aṭṭhakathācariyānaṃ matānusārena vinicchayo*).²⁸ After the *Explanation of Prominence* follows the *Explanation of Roots*. As the passage continues it becomes quite evident that the *Aṭṭhasālinī* has simply taken a section almost verbatim or perhaps slightly condensed from a rather formalized earlier source. Careful analysis would, I think, show some distinctive stylistic features. An earlier passage in the same commentary—the *Dvāra-kathā*, shows some of the same characteristics and is specifically attributed to the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*.²⁹

Since these passages are in any case authoritative and revered, we may suppose that their source is likely to be of considerably earlier date. The work of Adikaram would tend to suggest that little was added to the Sinhalese commentaries after the second century A.D.³⁰ Even if Adikaram's conclusion's are not accepted it makes little difference in this case. Not only does the *Vipākuddhāra-kathā* contain a very detailed account of the *citta-vīthi*. Even the differences between the views of the three Elders imply an elaborate theory of the consciousness process forming the basis of their discussion.

The Elders concerned are not unknown to us from other commentarial sources. So it is probably safe to assume that they are historical figures who actually did hold the views attributed to them. In that case we should expect to find the fully elaborated theory of the *citta-vīthi* already developed in the early first century A.D. This appears to be the view of A.K. Warder.³¹

The consciousness process and the Paṭṭhāna

Should we then take it that the theory originated with these Elders and their immediate predecessors? Or does it have a basis in the canonical abhidhamma literature? Nāṇamoli writes: 'An already-formed nucleus of the cognitive series, based on such *Sutta-piṭaka* material, appears in the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*.'³² In support of this statement he cites passages from the *Vibhaṅga* and the *Paṭṭhāna*, but he does not appear to have attempted a serious analysis of the contents of the last-named—the final work of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* in the traditional order.

If this is undertaken, the result is rather unexpected. So far from being a later elaboration on the basis of the canonical abhidhamma material, the theory of the *citta-vīthi* appears as only a slight restatement of the *Paṭṭhāna* with minor changes in terminology. Obviously this needs to be argued in detail.

The format of *Paṭṭhāna* is somewhat forbidding, although some of the essential principles involved seem clear enough. The work introduces for the first time in Pali literature the twenty four types of relation (*paccaya*). These are illustrated by applying them to the twenty two triplets and one hundred

couplets of the *abhidhamma-mātikā*—the mnemonic key which structures the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* and is employed in the *Vibhaṅga* and *Dhātu-kathā*. The permutations and combinations involved are rather more complex than this. Warder calls it: ‘one of the most amazing productions of the human mind’.³³ Fortunately most of the details are unnecessary for the present purpose.

We need only concern ourselves initially with two triplets, one couplet and one of the relations. The triplets are: 1. producing results; resultant; neither producing results nor resultant and 2. pleasant feeling; unpleasant feeling; neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling. The couplet is: caused; causeless. The only relation needed is the relation of succession (*anantara-paccaya*).

From the resultant triplet under the heading ‘resultant dhamma related to dhamma neither producing results nor resultant by succession relation’ we learn that ‘*bhavaṅga* is related to adverting by succession relation’.³⁴ From this it is apparent that *bhavaṅga* is some kind of resultant consciousness, while adverting is some kind of *kiriya* mentality. The very fact that these terms are used indicates that they designate a group of *cittas* for which no alternative designation is available in the *Paṭṭhāna*. The commentarial usage of *bhavaṅga* which covers all kinds of resultant mentality except resultant mind element and causeless mind consciousness element with pleasant feeling would seem exactly suitable.

Adverting is already referred to as a function of mind element in the *Vibhaṅga*.³⁵ So we might expect the *kiriya* mind element to be referred to here. However in the commentarial account given above we saw that the causeless *kiriya* mind consciousness element (with neutral feeling) performs this function in a mind door process. The *Paṭṭhāna* is clearly of the same view and therefore required a special term in order to exclude the same element with pleasant feeling; for according to the commentaries this does not perform the function of adverting.

In the same triplet under the heading of ‘dhamma neither producing results nor resultant is related to dhamma producing results by succession relation’ we read: ‘Adverting is related to fivefold consciousness by succession relation’. This seems quite clear as it stands. From the same triplet and relation we learn that: ‘Fivefold consciousness is related to resultant mind element

by succession relation’ and ‘Resultant mind element is related to resultant mind consciousness element by succession relation’. Here the commentaries restrict the resultant mind consciousness element concerned to the causeless types. From the same source we obtain: ‘Resultant mind consciousness element is related to *kiriya* mind consciousness element by succession relation’.

Later in the same portion of the *Paṭṭhāna* we find that: ‘Adverting is related to aggregates which are dhammas producing results by succession relation’, ‘Preceding aggregates which are dhammas producing results are related to subsequent aggregates which are dhammas producing results by succession relation’, ‘Aggregates which are dhammas producing results [are related] to emergence . . . by succession relation’ and ‘Preceding resultant aggregates are related to subsequent resultant aggregates by succession relation’. Nowhere does the *Paṭṭhāna* permit succession from resultant to producing results nor does it allow succession from producing results to neither producing results nor resultant. The similarity to the tables of permissible and impermissible succession given above is manifest.

Additional information can be added by turning to the feeling triplet.³⁶ *Bhavaṅga* can have either pleasant or neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling, but adverting can only have neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling. The resultant mind consciousness element which follows resultant mind element may have pleasant feeling. The *kiriya* mind consciousness which succeeds in turn must have neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling. Emergence (*vuṭṭhāna*) may have either pleasant or neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling.

From the caused couplet we can add:³⁷ ‘Caused *bhavaṅga* [is related to] causeless adverting by succession relation’, and vice versa; ‘Caused *bhavaṅga* [is related to] causeless *bhavaṅga* by succession relation’, and vice versa; ‘Caused aggregates [are related to] causeless emergence by succession relation’; ‘Causeless aggregates [are related to] caused emergence by succession relation’; ‘[Causeless] adverting to caused aggregates’; ‘[Causeless] adverting to the [causeless] five consciousnesses’.

In fact almost all the stages of the consciousness process are precisely specified in the *Paṭṭhāna*. So much so that it is clear that we should attribute the theory to the canonical abhidhamma

tradition—if not to the earlier abhidhamma then at least to the tradition or authors embodied in the *Paṭṭhāna*. Only a small amount of the technical nomenclature, some details and one significant development appear to be later.

The distinction between mind door and sense door process is known, although those terms are not used. Each of the separate functions is shown. This is best illustrated from the sense door process. *Bhavaṅga* is known by name, but that name is only used where it is needed to avoid ambiguity. In cases where the same statement can be accurately applied both to *javana* and to *bhavaṅga* the two stages are subsumed as ‘aggregates’ or they may be distinguished as e.g. ‘skilful aggregates’ and ‘resultant aggregates’. The theory of *bhavaṅga* is however fully developed.

The rootless *kiriya* consciousnesses with neutral feeling are already termed advertent. The succeeding sense consciousnesses are termed the five consciousnesses and succeeded by resultant mind element, which is in turn followed by resultant mind consciousness element with either neutral or pleasant feeling. After this comes *kiriya* mind consciousness element with neutral feeling, which when specified as advertent is rootless and succeeded by the variety of states which the later tradition calls *javana*. Apart from the last each of these lasts for only one moment. Indeed the *Paṭṭhāna* even allows for the fruitless case in which establishing is unable to bring about the arising of *javana* and simply repeats for one moment.³⁸ It does not however specify the duration.

The specific names are absent for only three of the functions: receiving, investigating and establishing. Significantly the *mahā-ṭṭkā* to the *Visuddhimagga* comments:³⁹

For those who do not accept the process *cittas* beginning with receiving as well as the heart base, the text (*pāṭi*) has been handed down in various places with the words beginning ‘for receiving, for eye consciousness element’; for the text cannot be set aside.

Unfortunately the text to which the *mahā-ṭṭkā* refers is not known to us. The functions of receiving, investigating and establishing are not known from any surviving canonical work. In several commentaries there is a mnemonic verse listing the seven

functions from *bhavaṅga* to *javana*;⁴⁰ no doubt this belongs to the period of the old Sinhalese commentaries if not earlier. The term *javana* is taken from the canonical *Paṭisambhidā-magga*,⁴¹ where it is used in a similar sense. In any case the term adds little to the usage of the *Paṭṭhāna* apart from brevity. This is perhaps the significant contribution of the later terminology.

The *Paṭṭhāna* does not usually use the term *tad-ārammaṇa*. Normally what the later tradition refers to in this way is simply designated *bhavaṅga*—the after-*bhavaṅga* of the commentaries. Often however the *Paṭṭhāna* employs the expression ‘emergence’ (*vuṭṭhāna*) for *bhavaṅga* and *tad-ārammaṇa* indiscriminately. This is obviously an extension of the older usage of *vuṭṭhāna* to refer to emergence from *jhāna*. Such an extension is quite appropriate since the *jhānas* consist of a series of *javana cittas*; so emergence from *jhāna* constitutes the departure from *javana* par excellence. The *Paṭṭhāna* does however use the expression *vipāko tad-ārammaṇatā uppajjati* in its treatment of object relation (*ārammaṇa-paccaya*).⁴² This must be the source of the later usage. Clearly emergence or *bhavaṅga* would be inappropriate here.

By the time of the Sinhalese commentaries two kinds of *tad-ārammaṇa* are distinguished under the names of root *bhavaṅga* and visiting *bhavaṅga*.⁴³ The term root *bhavaṅga* properly speaking should refer to that specific type of resultant consciousness which constantly recurs throughout the life of a given individual whenever there is no process at either the mind door or one of the sense doors. It is here extended to include a *tad-ārammaṇa* of the same type even although this would have a different object. However this is obviously closer to the usage of the *Paṭṭhāna*.

It is not in fact quite clear that the *Paṭṭhāna* knows the theory by which each individual has a single basic *bhavaṅga* mind throughout his lifespan. It is this theory which necessitates the distinction of a separate stage of *tad-ārammaṇa*. Many of our earlier sources are a little inconsistent in this regard. The mnemonic verse mentioned above does not include *tad-ārammaṇa* and neither do most of the traditional similes. There is even some uncertainty as to exactly how many moments of *tad-ārammaṇa* can occur—the *Visuddhimagga* records two different traditions on the matter.⁴⁴ It may well be the case that the debates recorded

in the *Vipākuddhāra-kathā* reveal the process by which the somewhat later theory of *tad-ārammaṇa* was finally formulated.

The *Paṭṭhāna* itself envisages only that kammically active stages arise and persist for a while. It does not specify seven moments as the maximum duration. It certainly envisages a return to a resultant consciousness. This may be one under the influence of the active aggregates which have just subsided or it may be one of a more long lasting kind. It does not however seem to specify the latter to be unchangeable or lifelong, but the possibility that this is what is intended cannot be ruled out.

Conclusion

It is clear that the theory of the consciousness process is well established in the *Paṭṭhāna*, a work which cannot be later than the second century B.C. To what extent it is to be found in earlier works such as the *Vibhaṅga* remains an open question, but the theory is not a product of the commentarial stage. It belongs rather to the classic abhidhamma.

With such a dating we need also to look again at its possible role in the development of Indian thought. If we assume that at least the idea of *bhavaṅga* mind was current also in other South Indian schools,⁴⁵ then the question should be asked as to what influence similar ideas may have had on the early Vijñānavāda.

MANCHESTER

L. S. COUSINS

Notes

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- 1 E. Lamotte, 'Traité de la démonstration de l'acte', *MCB* IV, 1936, p.250; 'L'Ālayavijñāna dans le Mahāyānasamgraha', *MCB*, III, 1935, pp.207-15; *La somme du grand véhicule*, II, Louvain, Muséon, 1938, pp.24 foll., 8* foll.; L. De La Vallée Poussin, *Vijñaptimātrat-siddhi : La Siddhi de Hiuan-Tsang*, I, Paris, 1928, pp.179, 196, 198.
- 2 (Ce 1954) p.17.

- 3 A. Bareau, *Les Sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*, Paris, EFEO, 1955, p.183.
- 4 O. H. de Wijesekera ('Canonical references to bhavaṅga', in Wijesekera, *Malalasekera Commemoration Volume*, Colombo, 1976, pp.348-52) has put forward an interesting defence of the reading *bhavaṅgam* at A II 79. On balance, however, it seems that Buddhaghosa's reading of *bhavaggam* is preferable in view of A III 202 where *bhavānaṃ aggo* is interpreted along the lines of his comment on *bhavaggam*; cf. also S III 83. However it is quite likely that in the orthography of Pāli manuscripts in Brahmī script such as Buddhaghosa would have had before him, the readings *bhavaṅga* and *bhavagga* would be indistinguishable.
- 5 Mil 299-300.
- 6 A. B. Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon*, Oxford, 1923, p.194.
- 7 E. R. Sarathchandra, *Buddhist Psychology of Perception*, Colombo, Ceylon University Press, 1958, p.79.
- 8 Nett 79.
- 9 Peṭ 98.
- 10 See the introductions to his PTS translations of Nett and Peṭ.
- 11 Nett Introduction p.XXXII.
- 12 Vism 460.
- 13 The *Visuddhimagga* gives a very systematic account. The three main passages occur in its treatment of the consciousness aggregate (Vism 457-60), in its description of the arising of consciousness as the third link of the dependent origination formula (Vism 546 foll.) and also in the discussion of *arūpa-sammasana* (Vism 617-8). It is nevertheless clear that the *Aṭṭhasālinī* preserves earlier material, particularly in the *Vipākuddhāra-kathā* (As 267-87) and to some extent also in the *Dvāra-kathā* (As 82-106). Both of these sources were obviously drawn upon for the Suttanta commentaries also. Notable however is the comment on *sampajañña* at Sv I 194-5, Ps I 262-3, Spk III 191-2, Vibh-a 355-6; Mp III 199 cites Sv.
- 14 Vism 456.
- 15 As 271; Vism 547.
- 16 Vism 458, cf. 554.
- 17 Vism 483 (mḥ) = Moh 126; Spk I 180; II 358; It-a I 101; Paṭis-a I 79.
- 18 As 140; 262; 308; cf. Paṭis I 80; Paṭis-a I 293-4; Ps I 167; Mp I 60 foll.; Dh-p-a I 23.
- 19 Sv-pt to Sv I 194 (*mūla-pariññā*).
- 20 As 72; Vism 617; Moh 21.
- 21 As 269 foll.; 292-3; Vism 458; 546; Sv III 1037; Spk I 151; Vbh-a 9; Ud-a 203.
- 22 Vism 456.
- 23 As 279.
- 24 As 280-1.
- 25 As 269; cf. Vism 459; 617; Ps II 226.

- 26 Sarathchandra, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
- 27 As 267–87.
- 28 Vism 103–4.
- 29 As 82–106.
- 30 E. W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo, Gunasena, 1953, pp. 1–42.
- 31 A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1970, pp. 321–5.
- 32 Vism Trsl. p. 131 n.; cf. also p. 515 n.
- 33 Warder *op. cit.*, p. 309.
- 34 The truncated PTS edition (Tikap) omits; see U Nārada, *Conditional Relations* (CR I), PTS, 1969, pp. 406–7 and Paṭṭh I (Ce 1954) 260.
- 35 Vibh 89: *sabbadhammesu . . . paṭhamasamannāhāro*, cf. Moh 128.
- 36 Tikap 324–6; CR I 338–40.
- 37 Dukap 45–6; Paṭṭh II (Ce 1954) 668.
- 38 Tikap-a 259–60; CR I 416.
- 39 Vism-mhṭ (Ce 1930) 479: *Ye hadaya-vatthu viya sampāṭicchanādi-vīthi-cittāni pi nānujānanti, tesam: 'sampāṭicchanāya cakkhu-viññāṇa-dhātuyā' ti ādinā tattha tattha pāḷi āgatā; na hi sakkā pāṭim paṭisedhetum.*
- 40 Sv I 194; Ps I 262; Spk III 191; Vibh-a 355.
- 41 Paṭis I 80–1.
- 42 e.g. Tikap 155; CR I 143.
- 43 As 270–1; 276; 285; 287; 360; Tikap 347; Spk III 71; Abhidh-av 50–1.
- 44 Vism 547; cf. Vism 459; As 265.
- 45 Buddhaghosa (Kv-a 219) certainly attributes such views to the Andhakas. We should perhaps think of the *mūla-vijñāna* which Asaṅga attributes to the Mahāsāṅghikas. It is not certain how far Buddhaghosa is correct in seeing Kv chap. X, 1 as referring to *bhavaṅga*.

A NEW THERAVĀDIN LITURGY

The texts so far published by the P.T.S. have all been derived from written sources. We shall here present a text acquired orally, though we have also made use of printed pamphlets. Theravāda Buddhist liturgical texts are few, and those used in Sri Lanka have hitherto been entirely in Pali. The text presented here is partly in Pali, partly in Sinhala. In content there is nothing radically new, but the religious service at which this text is used has a distinctive flavour which ever larger numbers of Sinhalese Buddhists find appealing.

The service has been invented and the text assembled, and in part composed, by a young monk called Pānadurē Ariyadhamma. The service he calls an *Aṭṭaviśi Buddha Pūjā* ('Worship of the Twenty-eight Buddhas'), or simply a *Buddha Pūjā*, but it has become popularly known as a *Bōdhi Pūjā*, and we shall see that this reflects a misunderstanding. So far most of the public performances of this *Buddha pūjā* have either been conducted by the Ven. Ariyadhamma himself or have used tape recordings of him, so that it is not yet possible to say whether the service can become popular without his participation as its leader. Not only does he have a most pleasing appearance and personal presence; his voice is extremely mellifluous and he chants in a musical way which contrasts strikingly with the usual clerical drone. When you mention the Ven. Ariyadhamma to people, his voice is usually the first thing they talk of. Those who know him personally, however, are devoted to him for more solid reasons: he radiates calm and kindness, and appears in his conduct to come as close as possible to the Buddhist ideal. He does not collect possessions, and every month when he has been conducting *Buddha pūjā* and the congregations in homage have presented him with masses of goods (mainly sets of the eight requisites, the conventional offering to a monk on such an occasion) he gives it all away to other monks. He does not even own proprietary rights (*ayitivāsikama*) in any monastery. He devotes himself to the religious life, both to preaching and to meditation (necessarily concentrating on the two activities in